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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5085
INFO RUMJPG/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 658
RUSBD/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9123
RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1724
RUSBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 7192
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1799
RUQMHR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY 375
RUSSKR/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 4328
RUHQHQA/CINCPAC PRIORITY
RUSNAAA/CINCEUR PRIORITY
RUFHNA/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 21
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SECRET SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 5967

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DEPT. ALSO FOR: A/SY/CC

KARACHI: FOR RSS

E.O. 12065: GDS 8-5-85 (FLATIN, BRUCE A.) OR-P
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, AF, PK, IR
SUBJECT: (LOU) AN INITIAL EVALUATION OF THE BALA HISSAR MUTINY

REF: KABUL 5942

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. SUMMARY: KABUL WAS AGAIN CALM ON AUGUST 6, FOLLOWING SEVERE FIGHTING THE PREVIOUS DAY BETWEEN MUTINOUS AFGHAN TROOPS AND FORCES LOYAL TO THE KHALQI REGIME. AFTER RESTORING ORDER, THE LATTER CLAIMED THAT THE TROUBLE HAD BEEN CAUSED BY "THE AGENTS OF PAKISTANI AND IRANIAN REACTION." THIS WAS AMONG THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGES THE KHALQI REGIME HAS YET FACED -- AND IT SHOWED ITSELF CAPABLE OF HANDLING IT. HOWEVER, THE EPISODE FORESHADOWED GROWING PROBLEMS FOR THE KHALQI REGIME AND ITS SOVIET MENTORS. END OF SUMMARY.

3. AS DAWN ROSE OVER KABUL ON AUGUST 6, THE CITY WAS SILENTLY QUIET, AND UNDER THE FIRM CONTROL OF THE KHALQI REGIME. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CONTINUED CLOSURE OF A FEW STRATEGIC STREETS, TRAFFIC WAS ALLOWED TO FLOW FREELY -- OVER PAVEMENTS TORN BY SPEEDING TANK TREADS THE PREVIOUS AFTERNOON.

4. MOST OF THE AUGUST 5 FIGHTING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CENTERED AT AND NEAR KABUL'S ANCIENT BALA HISSAR FORTRESS, SCENE OF BATTLES OVER SEVERAL CENTURES. ESSENTIALLY, THE MAJOR CONFLICT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN BETWEEN MUTINOUS TROOPS IN THAT AREA AND ARMORED UNITS, WHO REMAINED LOYAL TO THE KHALQI REGIME. EXACTLY WHAT INITIATED THE FIGHTING IS STILL UNCLEAR. SOME KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS THINK THAT A BALA HISSAR UNIT LAUNCHED THE MUTINY, BUT THAT THE BACKUP FORCES THE MUTINEERS HAD DEPENDED UPON SUBSEQUENTLY CHICKENED OUT. ALTHOUGH MUTINOUS TROOPS WERE FIGHTING INSIDE THE BALA HISSAR, THE RED KHALQI FLAG WAVED OVER THE FORTRESS DURING THE ENTIRE BATTLE. THIS INDICATES THAT THEY PROBABLY NEVER GAINED FULL CONTROL OVER THAT ENTIRE MILITARY COMPLEX. THE AUGUST 5 MUTINY, LIKE THE HAZARA SHI'A UPRISING OF JUNE 23, FAILED TO IGNITE ANY SIGNIFICANT SUPPORTING ACTION ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE ISOLATED FIRING INCIDENTS THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AROUND KABUL.

5. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE THE CASUALTIES AND PROPERTY DAMAGE AT THIS TIME BECAUSE SOME OF THE PRIMARY AFFECTED AREAS ARE STILL CORDONED OFF BY GOVERNMENT FORCES, EXTENSIVE TANK FIRE AND HELICOPTER GUNSHIP FIRE WAS PUMPED INTO THE BALA HISSAR NEIGHBORHOOD FOR OVER TWO HOURS IN A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF KHALGI OVERKILL TACTICS. ONE AFGHAN SOURCE, WHO LATER WAS ABLE TO GET NEAR TO THE BATTLE SITE, REPORTS THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF MUTINIOUS TROOPS WERE SLAUGHTERED. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO WAY OF VERIFYING CASUALTY FIGURES, WE DID NOTE DURING THE BATTLE WHAT APPEARED TO BE GOVERNMENT FIRING AT TROOPS FLEEING OVER THE SHERDARWAZAH MOUNTAIN SIDE THAT OVERLOOKS THE BALA HISSAR. WE ALSO NOTED HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS FIRING IN THE VICINITY OF THE KABUL-LOGAR ROAD. THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AT FLEEING MUTINEERS.

6. THE MOOD IN KABUL TODAY IS SULLEN AND RESENTFUL. IT IS TYPIFIED BY AN AFGHAN WHO MUTTERED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER: "IF ONLY THEY DID NOT HAVE THOSE PLANES, WE MUSLIMS WOULD TAKE CARE OF THEM" THIS COMMENT, INCIDENTALLY, ILLUSTRATES THE EFFICACY OF THE KHALGIS' HARD HITTING RETALIATORY TACTICS. THEY DO PRODUCE A SOBERING, INTIMIDATING EFFECT ON ANYONE WHO IS CONTEMPLATING ENTERING INTO THE FRAY.

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5086

INFO RUMJPG/AMEMBASSY PEIJING PRIORITY 659

RUSBD/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9124

RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1725

RUSBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 7193

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1800

RUMHR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY 376

RUSBR/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 4309

RUKHQQA/INCPAC PRIORITY

RUSNAAA/CINCEUR PRIORITY

RUFHNA/USMISSION USNAID PRIORITY 22

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SECRET SECTION 2 OF 2 KABUL 5967

NOFORN

DEPT. ALSO FOR: A/SY/CC

KARACHI: FOR RSS

E.O. 12865: GDS 8-5-85 (PLATIN, BRUCE A.) OR-P

7. COMMENT: THE BALA HISSAR BATTLE OF AUGUST 5 ALSO ILLUSTRATED ONE OF THE MAIN WEAKNESSES OF THE KHALQI REGIME: THEM

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TERIORATING RELIABILITY OF ITS REGULAR TROOPS. IT ALSO ILLUSTRATED AT THE SAME TIME AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE CONTINUING STRENGTH OF THE TOUGH, TENACIOUS KHALQI LEADERSHIP: THE FIRM SUPPORT OF THE COUNTRY'S KEY FORCES, SUCH AS COMMANDO UNITS, ARMORED BRIGADES, AND THE AIR FORCE. AS IN THE REVOLUTION OF APRIL 27-28, 1978, THE TANK AGAIN PROVED ITSELF TO BE A KEY WEAPON IN SECURING THE CONTROL OF KABUL. TO A LESSER DEGREE, THIS WAS ALSO TRUE OF THE HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS. AS WAS THE CASE DURING THE JUNE 23 UPRISING, THE KHALQIS AGAIN MADE QUICK USE OF THEIR PROPAGANDA ASSETS: DROPPING LEAFLETS FROM HELICOPTERS, MAKING ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM SOUND TRUCKS, AND ISSUING BUSINESSLIKE RADIO AND TELEVISION BULLETINS.

8. THE AUGUST 5 BATTLE WAS A MUCH MORE SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO THE KHALQI REGIME THAN THE HAZARA SHI'A UPRISING OF JUNE 23 HAD BEEN. IN THIS LATTER CASE, THE GROWING PROBLEM OF DISAFFECTION WITHIN MILITARY RANKS DISPLAYED ITSELF IN THE CAPITAL -- IN FULL VIEW OF THE AFGHAN ELITE AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS. SINCE THE MILITARY AND POLICE DEFECTIONS OF THE HERAT UPRISING IN MARCH AND THE MUTINY AT THE JALALABAD ARMY BASE IN APRIL, THERE HAVE BEEN REPEATED REPORTS OF DESERTIONS AND DEFECTIONS OF AFGHAN UNITS ENJ

GED AGAINST REBEL FORCES ALL OVER AFGHANISTAN. SOME OF THE UNITS INVOLVED HAVE BEEN LARGE, PERHAPS UP TO BATTALION AND REGIMENTAL SIZE. ALTHOUGH THE KEY UNITS AROUND KABUL REMAIN LOYAL AND EFFECTIVE -- AS THEY PROVED THEMSELVES AGAIN ON AUGUST 5, THIS MEMORRHAGING OF MANPOWER IS LIKELY TO CONFRONT THE KHALQIS AND THEIR SOVIET MENTORS WITH SOME TOUGH CHOICES. UNTIL NOW, THE USSR HAS BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THE TARAKI-AMIN OPERATION AFLOAT THROUGH GENEROUS INJECTIONS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT, MILITARY MATERIEL, AND MILITARY ADVISORS. THE LATTER HAVE BECOME STEADILY MORE NUMEROUS -- PERHAPS NOW TOTALLING SOME 2,000 -- AND THEY HAVE BEEN ENTERING INTO DIREIQ

COMMAND ROLES IN SOME UNITS. THEREFORE, THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET COMMITMENT APPEARS TO BE EVOLVING THROUGH STAGES NOT TOO UNLIKE THOSE THE USG WENT THROUGH IN VIETNAM (E.G., THE GRADUAL SOVIET ASSUMPTION OF CONTROL OVER BAGRAM AIR BASE).

~~9. IN VIEW OF THE WORSENING MANPOWER SITUATION, THE KHALQIS COULD EVENTUALLY ASK THE SOVIETS TO UP THEIR ANTE HERE BY CONTRIBUTING SOME COMBWOSUNITS. ONE POSSIBLE SCENARIO THE SOVIETS MAY CONSIDER IS THE ASSIGNMENT OF SPECIAL COMBAT~~

RCES TO KABUL, JALALABAD, AND -634 (36 LOCATIONS "TO PROTECT SOVIET CIVILIANS" THERE. (NOTE: KABUL'S MIKROYAN HOUSING DISTRICT FOR SOVIETS HAD HEAVY MILITARY PROTECTION DURING THE AUGUST 5 FIGHTING.)
~~END OF COMMENT.~~

10. SECURITY NOTE: NO AMERICANS WERE AFFECTED BY THE AUGUST 5 FIGHTING. THE U.S. MISSION IS CONDUCTING NORMAL OPERATIONS.

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